

No More Adhocracies

Reforming the Management of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

BY STUART W. BOWEN, JR.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.
—George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*

There now exists a “golden hour” for repairing the U.S. approach to stabilization and reconstruction operations (SROs). The past 8 years of rebuilding efforts in Iraq, fraught as they were with painful and expensive challenges, yielded numerous hard lessons that provide a clear basis for comprehensive systemic reform.

The Iraq experience exposed the truth that the United States is not well structured to carry out overseas contingency rebuilding operations. Although the program’s failures forced the government to develop and implement remedies, these exigent amendments did not fix what was (and still is) a broken system. As discussed further in this article, the current evolution in SRO planning and management (as found in the Department of State’s Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations) does not necessarily promise the kind of interagency integration essential to SRO success.

Wise reform would concentrate the SRO mission into a single structure, pulling the scattered pieces of the current inchoate system together under a single roof. This integral structure, which could be called the U.S. Office for Contingency Operations (USOCO), should be given a clear interagency mandate to command and carry out contingency relief and reconstruction operations. To succeed, it would need sufficient capabilities and capacities to oversee the kind of programs and projects that arise during SROs. Equally important, it must be held accountable for results.

Stuart W. Bowen, Jr., is Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

The many responsibilities inherent in SROs are now divided chiefly among the Department of State, Department of Defense (DOD), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). None of the three, however, is clearly in charge. Lacking an integral approach and the resources to undergird it, this weak system was largely ineffective in Iraq. Furthermore, the delay in imposing meaningful oversight compounded program shortfalls, which increased waste. By applying Iraq's lessons and streamlining existing resources, a holistic reform of U.S. stabilization strategy could produce an integral system that would avert significant waste in future SROs, increase the likelihood of tactical success, and better protect U.S. national security interests abroad.

no U.S. Government office had the sufficient mandate to plan, execute, and oversee the Iraq reconstruction program

Over the past 7 years, my office, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), developed an extensive catalogue of lessons learned derived from the oversight of the U.S. reconstruction effort in Iraq.¹ Through more than 370 audits and inspections, 5 lessons-learned reports, and hundreds of investigations, SIGIR repeatedly revealed the deleterious effects that stem from improvised interagency coordination, poor unity of command, and fragmented unity of effort in SROs. What caused these shortfalls? Our work revealed the answer: No U.S. Government office had the sufficient mandate to plan, execute, and oversee the Iraq reconstruction program.

The enervating weaknesses within the U.S. approach forced the Iraq rebuilding program

into a concatenation of ad hoc organizations. But this *adhocracy* failed to coalesce into a coherent management whole. Reconstruction planners consequently had neither the reliable capacity nor the necessary resources to complete successful programs and projects.

Given the effort's improvised nature and its constant personnel turnover, U.S. strategy continually shifted speed and course, wasting resources along the way and exposing taxpayer dollars to fraud and abuse. The program's management gap caused hundreds of projects to fall short of promised results, leaving a legacy of bitter dissatisfaction among many Iraqis, which ultimately weakened U.S. national security interests.

The U.S. Government responded to the Iraq program's manifold shortfalls by executing assessments and applying targeted remedies. But these few small repairs, being ad hoc, proved inadequate to resolve what fundamentally was a systemic weakness. They could not produce, *in medias res*, a rescue plan for a program whose core flaw was structural, the consequence of an improvidently designed management architecture. Without clarity of mission, unity of command, unity of effort, and clear accountability, the system's center could not hold and the program came apart.

The Hard Lessons of Iraq

The 8-year, \$62-billion U.S. reconstruction effort in Iraq revealed that the U.S. Government's system for executing SROs is neither coherent nor integrated.² From the program's abbreviated preparatory stage in early 2003 to the earlier-than-expected transfer of sovereignty to the Interim Iraqi Government in mid-2004, temporary organizations, expediently created in response to urgent requirements, planned and managed the coalition's variegated

Iraqi employees construct water treatment facility funded by USAID in Baghdad



U.S. Air Force (Ashley Brokop)

rebuilding initiatives. This ever-shifting ad hoc-acy lacked the expertise and capacity necessary to implement the coalition's ambitious reconstruction agenda. It was like a thousand untrained plate-spinners trying to perform during an earthquake, with expected results: lots of broken china.

In late January 2003, just 2 months before the coalition's invasion, President George W. Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 24, *Post-War Iraq Reconstruction*. In what some would later describe as a "palace coup" (because it co-opted the interagency planning process), the directive put DOD exclusively in charge of managing Iraq's relief and reconstruction. To oversee the effort, NSPD 24 established an ad hoc entity called the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). With virtually no staff and just 2 months to prepare, retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner, ORHA's first and only director, was given full responsibility for Iraq's postwar recovery.³

NSPD 24 further provided that USAID "would handle much of the humanitarian and reconstruction work, while ORHA would be in charge of funding."⁴ This bifurcated the rebuilding program's management responsibilities, with DOD in charge of funding and civilians in charge of policy—an awkward and waste-inducing division that would recur repeatedly over the next 8 years to the program's detriment. But General Garner and his team would not be a part of these subsequent iterations.

In early May 2003, barely having begun its work, ORHA was supplanted by another temporary structure, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), led by retired Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III. The CPA

quickly shouldered all relief and reconstruction responsibilities, including a wide range of duties that traditionally fell within the scope of State and USAID. This caused an operational tension, particularly with USAID, which would burden the rebuilding mission for years to come.

As a startup enterprise, the CPA had neither the time nor the resources to plan effectively for what quickly became the largest rebuilding program in history, one much larger than originally envisioned by the President or his planners. The extraordinary growth in spending levels illustrates the breathtaking scope of change that occurred with the advent of the CPA. In early 2003, the United States anticipated spending about \$2 billion in taxpayer dollars on Iraq's reconstruction, with Iraq shouldering the remaining costs. But by the end of July of that year, planned U.S. expenditures had increased ninefold.⁵

While some of the challenges faced by Ambassador Bremer's team were beyond his control—most notably, the security situation's collapse—a well-developed contingency rebuilding plan implemented by an established interagency management office (such as USOCO) could have brought a more robust capacity to bear on the many problems that erupted in Iraq in 2003–2004. Moreover, such an entity would have been better prepared to engineer timely and effective adjustments.

If USOCO had existed at the outset of the Iraq program, the United States might have avoided the waste of billions of taxpayer dollars. Furthermore, the unity of effort that USOCO presumably could have applied would have ensured better effect from the massive outlays in Iraq. Ultimately, ORHA and then the CPA became necessary because no established structure existed in 2003 to

manage SROs. That void, to a certain extent, still exists.

Recent Reform Initiatives

In July 2005, the U.S. Government implemented ameliorative efforts to mitigate problems in Iraq. Pursuant to Presidential directive, the Secretary of State created State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), designating it to "lead, coordinate, and institutionalize U.S. government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations."⁶ S/CRS was supposed to solve the "who's in charge question" regarding SROs. It did not.

From the outset, S/CRS struggled to find its footing. First, it failed to receive the funding necessary to succeed; then it found itself marginalized within State's turf-conscious bureaucracy. Though eventually authorized by congressional act in 2008, S/CRS cannot today be characterized as a successful repair. This truth became transparently evident in State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), entitled *Leading Through Civilian Power* and issued in December 2010, which recommended that S/CRS be absorbed into the new Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO).⁷ Notwithstanding its difficult history, S/CRS still constitutes a valuable resource, comprising many well-trained personnel awaiting clear-cut guidance. But the current strategy for its future use remains unclear.

The Pentagon's pursuit of expanded stabilization operations' capacities has been much more robust than either State's or USAID's. In November 2005, the Secretary of Defense issued Defense Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations*, committing the military to developing and expanding its SRO capabilities.⁸

This revolutionary directive defined *stability operations* as military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to war activities in order to establish or maintain order, further stating that stability operations are a "core U.S. military mission" that should be given priority comparable to combat operations.⁹ In 2009, DOD reissued Directive 3000.05 as an Instruction, emphasizing again that the military must be ready to support civilian agencies in stability operations.

the Pentagon's pursuit of expanded stabilization operations' capacities has been much more robust than either State's or USAID's

Despite repeatedly recognizing the centrality of a "civilian lead" for SROs, DOD has made limited progress in integrating civilian agencies into its approach. It generally conceives of contingency operations, known as "STAB-OPS" at the Pentagon, as an aspect of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The civilian agencies see "postconflict" contingencies as relief and reconstruction endeavors called SROs, deeming them to be an operational point on the diplomacy/development continuum. Bringing reconciliation and exactitude to both the semiotics and semantics of COIN and SRO is crucial to contingency reform. Creating USOCO could provide a platform for the development of an interagency lingua franca applicable to all stabilization operations.

In December 2005, President Bush issued NSPD 44, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, stating that "reconstruction and stabilization are more closely tied to foreign policy leadership

and diplomacy than to military operations.”¹⁰ Through this Executive order, the President sought to set in motion a process to improve the coordination, planning, and implementation of U.S. Government stabilization and reconstruction missions.¹¹

Though rightly responding to observed weaknesses in Iraq, the President’s directive ultimately foundered on the shoals of competing interagency interests. For example, NSPD 44 charged the coordinator for S/CRS to lead the development of a strong stability and reconstruction response mechanism and ordered State and DOD to “integrate stabilization and reconstruction contingency plans with military contingency plans when relevant and appropriate.”¹² But S/CRS deployed no one to Iraq (and it has only intermittently deployed small numbers of personnel to Afghanistan, chiefly to fill empty slots in Provincial Reconstruction Teams [PRTs]).¹³ Despite the White House’s reform impetus, State and DOD did not sufficiently integrate civilian SRO systems with military contingency capabilities.

Toward the end of his administration, President Bush signed the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Title XVI of which contained the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 (RSCMA).¹⁴ Codifying S/CRS into law, RSCMA assigned chief responsibility for planning and managing the civilian response to overseas contingencies to State. Since its passage, many important RSCMA provisions have not been implemented (including the appointment of an assistant secretary to head the office), and the funding for its various authorizations has fallen far short of the act’s legislative vision.

In December 2009, in a *sua sponte* effort to impose “jointness” on SROs, Secretary of

Defense Robert Gates sent a memorandum to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggesting “a new model of shared responsibility and pooled resources for cross-cutting security challenges.” This move reflected an approach now employed by the United Kingdom. Secretary Gates’s proposal envisioned a pooled-funding mechanism, requiring joint approval by DOD and State for support of SRO efforts in security, capacity development, stabilization, and conflict prevention.¹⁵ Although forward-leaning in concept, the joint-funding process had limited effect on SRO activity in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The recently adopted “Global Security Contingency Fund” apparently seeks to carry forward the integral ideal embodied by this fiscal initiative.

State’s Latest Reform Initiative

In its inaugural QDDR, State proposed several new structural reforms that, if adopted, could improve SRO management. The review’s recommendations include:

- ❖ expanding joint (civil-military) training programs for senior State personnel, such as Chiefs of Mission and Deputy Chiefs of Mission
- ❖ making interagency experience a prime criterion for promotion to State’s senior ranks
- ❖ creating the new Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations, which would subsume the mission and staff of S/CRS.¹⁶

Among other things, the QDDR calls for CSO to “enhance” the Civilian Reserve Corps, coordinate the building of civilian SRO capacities among key allies, and provide SRO specialists to State’s regional bureaus—ambitious agenda items all, and quite similar to those

set forth for S/CRS at its inception.¹⁷ Once fully operational, CSO will coordinate State's efforts at conflict prevention and manage the rapid deployment of civilian responders as crises develop, while serving as the department's institutional locus for developing SRO policy and operational capacity.¹⁸

State hopes to ensure that CSO does not suffer from the same shortcomings encountered during previous attempts to improve SRO management by staffing it with experts, including civilian specialists from other Federal agencies. Left unsaid, however, is precisely *how* it will do that. This is crucial to determine, given how previous efforts were stymied. Obtaining interagency buy-in, absent a congressional demand for this new initiative, could be difficult. The QDDR itself leaves CSO's relations with other agencies, including USAID, purposefully opaque, merely noting that the bureau would "work closely with [USAID] senior leadership."¹⁹

The CSO will be headed by an assistant secretary who will have the broad but somewhat ill-defined mandate of acting as the Secretary of State's senior adviser on "conflict and instability."²⁰ This role will be in addition to the challenging portfolio of creating, staffing, and managing a new bureau in a turf-conscious department at a time of significant budget-cutting from Congress. Former U.S. Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Ambassador Fredrick Barton will lead the CSO,²¹ and he is an excellent choice given his broad expertise in the SRO arena. But whether he will have the resources and independent authority to do more than simply develop plans remains an open question.

In recent informal conversations with SIGIR officials, current and former S/CRS personnel acknowledged the difficulties being

confronted by department planners charged with establishing CSO. Current operations have been impeded, and some S/CRS personnel feel as if they are in limbo. Until CSO becomes operational, the nature of S/CRS's future operational use will remain murky.²²

Notwithstanding its potential merit, the CSO solution, as currently drawn, is incomplete. Arguably, establishing the CSO is a step toward better coordination of the diverse SRO missions now distributed among several offices within State. But the CSO only absorbs some of these offices, leaving others independently operating under other mandates (for example, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives). Furthermore, the CSO does not touch those offices within the Departments of Defense, Treasury, and Justice, which play important roles in SROs. Consequently, while the CSO proposal may advance State's thinking about SRO management, it does not ultimately resolve many of the existing interagency SRO disconnects. "Stovepiping" would continue.

establishing the CSO is a step toward better coordination of the diverse SRO missions now distributed among several offices within State

SRO management issues cannot be solved simply by redrawing an organization chart or increasing appropriations. While it is true that State's budget is a fraction of the Pentagon's, the department's poor performance in managing the largest contracts in its history—for example, the DynCorp International contract for police training in Iraq—does not portend well regarding its capacity to oversee future SROs. Creating USOCO would allow State to focus on its core

competencies—diplomacy and development—while working closely with USOCO on the contingency rebuilding mission.

Advantages of an Integrated SRO Management Office

USOCO's creation would yield several immediate benefits. First, consolidating SRO offices and missions within one agency would eliminate structural redundancies and save taxpayer dollars. Second, having a civilian-led agency in charge of SROs would mitigate the perception that U.S. assistance programs have become militarized. Third, managing SROs would move from being an additional duty at State and Defense to the primary duty of USOCO. Finally, USOCO would provide an institutional home for the management of a series of urgently needed SRO reform initiatives and thereby ensure that lessons learned become lessons applied.

One (Invisible) Hand Clapping. Current fiscal realities—most notably, a \$14 trillion national debt—drive the need to improve the efficiency of SROs. Furthermore, the aftermath of the global financial crisis limits the capacity of donor nations to contribute to these costly operations. At the same time, the economic downturn has exacerbated tensions in fragile states, heightening the risk of increased instability. That risk has rapidly become a reality across today's Middle East.

As a matter of fiscal responsibility, USOCO makes eminent sense. The cost of running a single SRO office would be covered many times over by averting waste that would result from poor planning and weak management (see Iraq's reconstruction 2003–2008).²³ As the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan recently reported, unacceptable waste continues today

in Afghanistan because operational responsibilities for executing stabilization operations remain diffused across too many agencies.²⁴ Consolidating the existing system under one roof would induce unity of effort and produce significant savings, while simultaneously reducing redundancies, rationalizing lines of authority, and improving the protection of our national security interests.

To ensure operational agility and low overhead costs, USOCO would scale its size according to the needs of the mission at hand. During periods when overseas deployments are few, USOCO's small permanent staff would engage in formulating plans and conducting exercises to prepare for future SROs. The truth is, though, that the United States has been engaged in some form of SRO every year but 2 since 1980. Given that history, USOCO should expect to have virtually no fallow time.

Institutional Changes That USOCO Would Quickly Implement. USOCO would provide the needed nexus for developing government-wide SRO solutions. Subsequent to its creation, USOCO would do the following:

- ❖ Draft doctrine. Clear-cut SRO doctrine would be developed by USOCO, with the National Security Council (NSC) defining requirements and identifying implementing mechanisms.
- ❖ Integrate planning. USOCO would bring together all relevant agencies to develop integral contingency plans for SROs. Currently, there is “no systemic effort at strategic planning [for SROs] that is inclusive, deliberate, or integrative.”²⁵
- ❖ Rationalize budgeting. The NSC and the Office of Management and Budget would work with USOCO to develop

realistic budget requirements for potential contingencies.

- ❖ Incentivize personnel. Existing Federal personnel regulations would be adjusted to provide stronger incentives that would reward civilian employees for accepting temporary deployments in support of SROs.
- ❖ Consolidate training. Existing SRO training initiatives would be consolidated into an interagency training center with a joint curriculum modeled on the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's Interagency Fellowship Program.
- ❖ Reform contracting. USOCO would implement new contingency contracting procedures for universal use in SROs, which would improve contract management in theater and ensure a more accountable program.
- ❖ Coordinate with contractors. USOCO would provide contractors with a single point of contact, simplifying reporting responsibilities and improving coordination.
- ❖ Anticipate international involvement. USOCO would develop curricula, programs, and systems that anticipate international participation in future contingency operations.
- ❖ Integrate information technology (IT). USOCO would develop a single interoperable IT system capable of tracking all relief and reconstruction projects in theater.
- ❖ Ensure oversight. USOCO's structure would include an independent

Special Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations who would provide effective oversight through audits and investigations of all funds used during the SRO.

The Elements of an Effective SRO Reform Bill

SROs do not fit easily into any of the 3Ds: defense, diplomacy, and development; stabilization and reconstruction operations are executed during the unsettled periods occurring between the termination of full-blown conflict and the resumption of long-term development.

It is crucial that the legislation creating USOCO precisely define *stabilization and reconstruction operations*. Derived from the Army War College's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute's definition,²⁶ stabilization and reconstruction operations could usefully be described as circumstances where a combination of security, reconstruction, relief, and/or development services should, in the national interest of the United States, be provided to an unstable nation, including assistance for the development of military and security forces, infrastructure, and other essential services.

USOCO could someday play a role in the stabilization and reconstruction programs that occur after cataclysms

Notably, this definition does not specifically envision USOCO operating in the aftermath of natural disasters. Responding to those catastrophes would remain the responsibility of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. But USOCO plausibly could someday play a

role in the stabilization and reconstruction programs that occur after cataclysms.

Clarifying USOCO Operational Space.

The best institutional analogue to USOCO is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). USOCO's operational engagement could feasibly mirror many of the methods defined under the Stafford Act, which governs FEMA. USOCO's enabling statute could draw from the Stafford Act's paradigm by tying its operational authority to a Presidential declaration.²⁷ In many respects, USOCO would be a type of international FEMA, but would operate solely in the national security context with the potential to respond to other contingencies as its capacities mature.

In the event of an SRO, the President would issue a declaration specifying the date of its commencement, activating USOCO's access to SRO funds and outlining the SRO's geographical and operational parameters. During the life of the SRO, the USOCO director would report to the Chief of Mission, ensuring that USOCO programs and projects harmonize with the State Department's foreign policy and development goals.

the long-term benefits of developing an integrated SRO management office decidedly outweigh the near-term restructuring costs

USOCO staff would embed within the combatant command overseeing the affected theater to ensure close coordination with military units on SRO activities. When the need for a complex contingency stabilization operation no longer exists, the President would issue a declaration terminating the SRO. USOCO would then shift remaining programs and

projects to the appropriate entity, presumably the host nation or State/USAID.

Defining USOCO Leadership and Reporting Requirements. The USOCO director would be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, reporting to and under the general supervision of the Secretary of State *and* the Secretary of Defense. This dual-reporting, though rare in government, mirrors SIGIR's reporting requirements, which has worked effectively in the oversight of Iraq's reconstruction. Both Departments have a major role in SROs and thus both should have a major say in their planning and execution. Furthermore, the dual-reporting reflects the public recognition by the Secretaries of State and Defense regarding the civilian/military nature of SROs. USOCO would also have a deputy director and three associate directors. The three associate directors would include one each from Defense, State, and USAID.

USOCO would have robust reporting responsibilities to Congress. Within 30 days after the end of each fiscal-year quarter, the director would submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a comprehensive report summarizing USOCO's activities and expenditures for that quarter. Each quarterly report would include a detailed statement of all obligations, expenditures, and revenues associated with any ongoing stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Consolidating SRO Structures under USOCO. Current SRO lines of responsibility, accountability, and oversight are poorly defined. To remedy this predicament, USOCO's enabling legislation should consolidate certain existing offices responsible for discrete aspects of SROs, potentially including all or part of the following:



- ❖ S/CRS
- ❖ DOD capacities established under Defense Directive 3000.05
- ❖ USAID Office of Transition Initiatives
- ❖ Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance and Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training Programs, and Department of the Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance
- ❖ General Services Administration's Contingency Acquisition Corps.

The long-term benefits of developing an integrated SRO management office decidedly outweigh the near-term restructuring costs.

Institutionalizing Oversight: Special Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations. An independent Office of the Inspector General would be an integral part of this reform. The new Special Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations (SIGOCO), an element within USOCO, would have authority to oversee all accounts, spending, and activities related to an overseas contingency operation regardless of the implementing agency. That would ensure the uninterrupted supervision of U.S. expenditures made during a contingency operation, not merely those made by USOCO. The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan recently endorsed the need to create a permanent inspector general for contingency operations.²⁸ The idea was recently picked up by Congress, with legislation already introduced to create SIGOCO.

Other Statutory Powers. USOCO's enabling act should empower the director with the legal authority to:

- ❖ issue contingency acquisition regulations that have the force of the Federal Acquisition Regulation with respect to acquisition activities intended for use in stabilization and reconstruction emergencies
- ❖ prepare information and financial management systems for use in planning for and executing SROs
- ❖ establish an interagency training, preparation, and evaluation framework for all personnel deployed in support of SROs
- ❖ establish a Stabilization and Reconstruction Reserve Fund that USOCO would administer during SROs.

the Canadian and Dutch SRO offices are inherently creatures of their respective foreign ministries and lack the necessary degree of civilian-military integration needed to reform the U.S. approach to SROs

Existing International Models

Several Western nations already have created dedicated SRO management offices. The offices in the United Kingdom and Canada—and to a lesser extent the Netherlands—are fully charged with managing SROs and accordingly provide a glimpse of what an operational USOCO could do.²⁹

The most applicable existing model for USOCO is the United Kingdom's Stabilisation

Unit (SU). The SU is an independent agency that reports to a tripartite board consisting of senior officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence (MOD), and Department for International Development (DFID). It is staffed by personnel from all three departments and operates in conflict and postconflict environments but does not deploy in response to natural disasters. The SU has about 50 permanent staff, supplemented by detailees from other governmental departments, but it can draw on a civilian reserve component numbering more than 1,000. It also has an \$85 million interdepartmental conflict funding pool to support its operations. To date, the SU has been active in Sudan, Haiti, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³⁰

Similar in many ways to the SU, Canada's Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) is responsible for coordinating that nation's response to major complex international crises. It implements stabilization and reconstruction programs in fragile states; administers the Canadian Police Arrangement, which allows for the deployment of Canadian police officers to stabilization operations; and provides civilian experts for international peace operations. START, a subordinate office within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, has an operating budget of just under \$20 million per year and administers a \$146 million Global Peace and Security Fund.³¹ It has a staff of about 60 and, if necessary, can draw on a substantial civilian reserve component. START deploys to both postconflict fragile states and to regions devastated by natural disasters, and it assisted with relief efforts after the Haitian earthquake and the Pakistani floods.³² It is now contributing personnel to PRTs in Afghanistan.

Much like START, albeit on a smaller scale, the Fragile States Unit (FSU)³³ is an office within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) responsible for coordinating Dutch strategies toward fragile states. The FSU has about 2 dozen full-time personnel—all from the MFA—and maintains a roster of private-sector experts upon which it can draw in the event of a contingency operation. The FSU can access a Stability Fund to finance reconstruction projects, subject to the approval of an interagency steering committee. To date, its teams have been active in Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi, and Kosovo.³⁴

Bringing together elements of the Foreign Office, MOD, and DFID, the United Kingdom's SU is the most apt analogue to USOCO. With a small permanent staff capable of rapid growth during a crisis, it represents a cost-effective way of consolidating SRO expertise in a single office. The Canadian and Dutch SRO offices, while appropriate for those countries, are inherently creatures of their respective foreign ministries and lack the necessary degree of civilian-military integration needed to reform the U.S. approach to SROs.

Closing the Hole in Government: A Plausible Solution

In recent years, the U.S. Government has pursued an abstract SRO management strategy called *whole of government*. This simultaneously opaque and glib term has yet to generate an operational structure that is either comprehensive or coherent. Whole-of-government's core flaw is that it ensures that everyone is partly in charge of SROs—thus, no one is in charge.

Since 2007, the chief mechanism for addressing SRO issues has been the Interagency Management System (IMS). It essentially

provided guidance on issues that bubbled up from the Iraq and Afghanistan SROs (rather than top-down management) through a National Security Council committee chaired by the director of S/CRS. The IMS had limited effect on the execution of SROs in theater and is now largely dormant.

implementing USOCO could be the means by which the hard lessons from Iraq are turned into best practices for Afghanistan and beyond

Key stakeholders in the U.S. interagency community generally agree on the need for robust SRO reform, but dispute continues as to the shape such reform should take. State is pressing ahead with the CSO, but its mandate does not indicate that it will be operating aggressively on an interagency level. Others have argued for creating an independent USAID and giving it the full SRO mission. Some support a quasi-independent SRO management entity (as in the United Kingdom).

In discussions with SIGIR, Ambassador Ryan Crocker (after his appointment to Iraq and before his appointment to Afghanistan) and former National Security Advisor Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft endorsed the idea of an independent SRO office like USOCO. Ambassador James Dobbins expressed support for creating a USOCO-like entity, but only if it is placed within USAID. Former U.S. Central Command commander General Anthony Zinni likes the concept but advocates embedding it within DOD as a combatant command analogue. But housing a new SRO office within State, USAID, or Defense leaves the stovepiping problems that plague the current system unresolved.

With the Iraq experience still fresh in mind and the Afghanistan SRO likely to continue for several years, circumstances are ripe for bold reform. Implementing USOCO could be the means by which the hard lessons from Iraq are turned into best practices for Afghanistan and beyond. Consolidating existing resources and structures under USOCO would achieve money-saving management efficiencies that would avert waste in future SROs and thus produce real financial savings for the U.S. Government. Moreover, integrating the planning, management, and execution of SROs would ensure that the next time the United States undertakes such an operation, those deployed to execute the mission will have the mandate, expertise, and resources to achieve victory.

The bottom line is that creating USOCO would dramatically improve the bottom line of our SRO balance sheet, significantly increase the likelihood of success in future SROs, better protect U.S. national security interests abroad, and strengthen the stewardship of scarce taxpayer dollars in the next stabilization and reconstruction operation. Moreover, that next operation may soon be upon us. **PRISM**

Notes

¹ The U.S. Congress created the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), an independent Federal agency, in 2004. SIGIR has oversight of the more than \$58 billion in U.S. funds committed thus far to the reconstruction of Iraq. This article is based on SIGIR's most recent lessons learned report: *Applying Iraq's Hard Lessons to the Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, which recommends an innovative solution to the persistent problem of integrating civilian agencies' efforts with those of the military during overseas stability and reconstruction operations. The complete report is available at <www.sigir.mil/applyinghardlessons/index.html>.

² SIGIR, *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2011, 3, available at <www.sigir.mil/files/quarterlyreports/January2011/Report_-_January_2011.pdf#view=fit>.

³ *In the Wake of War: Improving U.S. Post-Conflict Capabilities*, Report of an Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2005), 11, available at <www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Post-Conflict_Capabilities_final.pdf>.

⁴ L. Elaine Halchin, *The Coalition Provisional Authority: Origin, Characteristics, and Institutional Authorities*, RL32370 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 29, 2004), CRS-2, available at <www.fas.org/man/crs/RL32370.pdf>.

⁵ See SIGIR, *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 2009), chapters 5–10, available at <www.sigir.mil/files/HardLessons/Hard_Lessons_Report.pdf>.

⁶ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, P.L. 108–447, § 408 (2004).

⁷ *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington, DC: Department of State, December 2010), available at <www.state.gov/documents/organization/153108.pdf>.

⁸ Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington, DC: DOD, November 28, 2005).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dane F. Smith, Jr., *An Expanded Mandate for Peace Building: The State Department Role in Peace Diplomacy, Reconstruction, and Stabilization* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], April 30, 2009), 39.

¹¹ In March 2004, CSIS President John Hamre endorsed legislation that would have institutionalized stabilization policy within the National Security Council. Instead, President George W. Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive 44, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*.

¹² Field Manual 3–07, *Stability Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, October 2008), 13.

¹³ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, October 30, 2003, 3, available at <www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Oct2010/Lores/SIGAR4Q_2010Book.pdf>.

¹⁴ The Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 was included as Title XVI of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, which was signed into law on October 14, 2008, as P.L. 110–417. It is similar to an earlier bill proposed by Senator Richard Lugar and then-Senator Joseph Biden, which passed the Senate Foreign Relations committee but did not go further.

¹⁵ Robert M. Gates, Options for Remodeling Security Sector Assistance Authorities, introduction to proposal in Memorandum for Secretary of State, December 15, 2009.

¹⁶ *Leading Through Civilian Power*, chapter 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 136.

²⁰ Ibid., 134–135.

²¹ Ibid.

²² SIGIR discussions with State’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization officials, mid-2011.

²³ SIGIR estimates that an office with a standing capacity of 200 staff would run approximately \$30 million annually. Waste resulting from management failures in Iraq alone is approximately \$4 to 5 billion (SIGIR estimate).

²⁴ Todd Moss, “Too Big to Succeed? Why (W)Hole-of-Government Cannot Work for U.S. Development Policy,” *Global Development: Views from the Center*, October 5, 2010, available at <<http://blogs.cgdev.org/globaldevelopment/2010/10/too-big-to-succeed-why-whole-of-government-cannot-work-for-u-s-development-policy.php>>.

²⁵ Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, “Strategic Planning for National Security,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 41 (2^d Quarter, 2006), 80–81.

²⁶ See *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, 2009), available at <<http://pksoi.army.mil/PKM/publications/collaborative/collaborativereview.cfm?collaborativeID=2>>.

²⁷ Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, P.L. 93–288, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 5121–5207, and Related Authorities, June 2007, available at <www.fema.gov/pdf/about/stafford_act.pdf>.

²⁸ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, “At what risk? Correcting over-reliance on contractors in contingency operations,” February 24, 2011, appendix A, available at <www.wartimecontracting.gov/docs/CWC_InterimReport2-lowres.pdf>.

²⁹ Presentations made by various parties at the Civil Military Interaction Seminar, Sydney, Australia, December 6–9, 2010; SIGIR analysis of publicly available government documents. Germany, Australia, and

Sweden have stabilization and reconstruction operations agencies that focus on research and training, but do not deploy as units to support overseas contingency operations.

³⁰ Stabilisation Unit's presentation made at the Civil Military Interaction Seminar, Sydney, Australia, December 6–9, 2010.

³¹ Canada's Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force presentation made at the Civil Military Interaction Seminar, Sydney, Australia, December 6–9, 2010.

³² Ibid.

³³ This unit is also known as the Peace-Building and Stabilization Unit.

³⁴ Finn Stepputat, "Integrated National Approaches to International Operations: The Cases of Denmark, UK, and the Netherlands," *DIIS Report: The Civil-Military Agenda* 14 (2009), 47–48, available at <www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2009/DIIS_Report_2009_14_Integrated_National_Approaches_International_Operations_web.pdf>.